



Working with Interpreters and Translators⁹⁵

Overview

When working with parents and families, school personnel may need to communicate with parents who speak a language different than their own. Interpretation or translation services are an effective way to bridge this communication barrier.

Types of Interpretation

Simultaneous Verbatim Interpreting

- An interpreter translates the message as it is conveyed but still preserves the style, tone, and word choice of the original speaker. The interpreter does not speak at precisely the same instant as the speaker, but a few seconds later.

Consecutive Verbatim Interpreting

- An interpreter interprets the message after the speaker has completed his/her thought. The speaker may pause at the end of a statement, or the interpreter might ask that the speaker pause if the message is long and complex. Because this is a form of verbatim interpreting, the interpreter translates everything the speaker says.
- Consecutive verbatim requires more time than simultaneous interpreting, because each statement must be interpreted before the dialogue can continue.
- There is also a loss of spontaneity since conversation is so frequently interrupted. This can be minimized, however, if everyone is familiar with the need to pause and with the speaker's use of signals, such as raising his/her hand to indicate a need to pause and an affirmative head nod to indicate that the speaker may continue.

Summary Interpreting

- This is a non-verbatim method – the interpreter summarizes the words of the speaker by paraphrasing and condensing the original message. The interpreter may listen for a while and then relay a condensed version of what has been said.
- In the summary method, in contrast to the simultaneous and consecutive verbatim methods, the intervals at which the interpreter speaks cannot be described with precision. The interpreter may choose to summarize at frequent intervals, may wait until the speaker finishes a thought, or until the end of a certain proceeding.
- Following the definition of summary interpretation, the interpreter is forced to omit information at his/her discretion. Thus, the interpreter should be very aware of the interests of the audience to best decide what information is significant. The audience should also be informed that they are receiving a summary of the original information.

Basic Principles of Interpretation

Prior to the meeting or conference:

- Establish a relationship with the interpreter and ensure that he/she understands the purpose and goals of your event.
- Give the interpreter an opportunity to ask questions about the topic to be discussed.
- Help the interpreter understand education terminology, such as school and district rules, state and federal laws, and the related vocabulary.
- Ensure that you have the appropriate cultural knowledge to interact with your audience. Ask your interpreter if there is anything you should be aware of, especially in relation to non-verbal and body language.
- Clarify what interpreting style and process you intend to use. Also establish non-verbal time signals, especially if a pause is needed in order to translate information.

During the meeting or conference:

- Have the interpreter include school personnel's job titles during introductions so families understand who they are meeting – the principal, their child's teacher, etc.
- Encourage the interpreter to promote a feeling of warmth, trust, confidence, and professionalism with the school personnel and with the client.
- Ensure that families understand the translation process - that they will receive a complete interpretation of everything that is said.

After the meeting or conference:

- Have the interpreter make any clarifications and clear up any confusion that may have occurred during the meeting or event.

Additional Information & Resources

1. American Translators Association, <http://www.atanet.org/>
2. Translation, Getting it Right – A guide to buying translations
http://www.atanet.org/publications/getting_it_right.php
3. Recommendations and Resources for the Translation of Written Documents – California State Personnel Board
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/documents/qualityindicators.pdf>